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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA POLITICAL NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 19-OCTOBER 23

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¶1. (SBU) This was written in partnership with the Open Source Center's Pretoria Bureau. The newsletter is open to contributions from officers in the Embassy or in the Consulates who wish to highlight political trends. Contact Madeline Seidenstricker or Jonathan Smallridge for more information, or to make contributions. The newsletter also is available on the Political Section's blog, "A View from South Africa," found on intelink.gov.

Domestic News

President Disappointed Democratic Alliance in Power in Western Cape

¶2. (U) President Jacob Zuma told members of the provincial general council meeting in Mitchell's Plain Cape Town that he was disappointed the Democratic Alliance (DA) is in power in Western Cape Province following its victory in the April election. The president was addressing a provincial council meeting in the Western Cape on October 18. He shared with the province what the African National Congress (ANC) needs to do to rebuild its structures and branches for the 2011 elections. Zuma's remarks come after months of infighting in the Western Cape, which led to ANC National Executive committee dismantling the leadership in July. (SABCNEWS, October, 18, 2009)

Service Delivery Tops Zuma's Agenda

¶3. (U) Zuma met with executive mayors and city managers to discuss the state of local governments and service delivery improvement. Premiers and municipal managers also attended the meeting, which was held in Khayelitsha, Cape Town on October 20. The meeting follows service delivery improvement meetings held by the President in August. According to the Presidency's office, Zuma decided to take a more direct approach in dealing with local government issues and all matters of service delivery. Zuma was accompanied by Monitoring and Evaluation Minister Collins Chabane, National Planning Commission Minister Trevor Manuel, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, Human Settlements Minister Tokyo Sexwale and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Sicelo Shiceka. (BuaNews, October, 20, 2009)

ANC in Gauteng Province Accuses Communist Party of Inciting Protests

¶4. (U) The ANC in Gauteng has accused South African Communist Party (SACP) members of inciting service delivery protests in Johannesburg. Addressing the media in Johannesburg, Gauteng ANC Provincial Secretary David Makhura told reporters that the ANC has evidence that the protest were organized by the SACP. He cited factionalism in the province as the motive.

Congress of South African Trade Unions Want Food Prices Regulated

15. (U) The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has called on the government to put measures in place to tackle increasing food prices. COSATU members handed a memorandum to the Ministry of Agriculture in Parliament on World Food day in protest against high food prices. COSATU Spokesperson Tony Ehrenreich said the union was concerned that prices for basic foods such as bread and milk had not gone down despite global trends. The union said World Food Day is as a reminder that the world can produce enough food to feed all human beings. Millions experience regular hunger owing to profit driven food production, processing, and procurement and distribution distortions. (October, 19, 2009)

Nelspruit changes to Mbombela

16. (U) The name of Mpumalanga Province's capital city has been changed from Nelspruit to Mbombela. The change follows Arts and Culture Minister Lulu Xingwana's publication in the government gazette of 42 geographical name changes which were approved between July and September 2009. Some of the approved name changes in Mpumalanga are Belfast to eMakhazeni, Waterval Boven to Emgwenya, Machadodorp to eNtokozweni, and Nelspruit to Mbombela. The department spokesperson Premi Appalraju told reported that in Mbombela Municipality 75 percent of people in 36 wards around Nelspruit supported the proposed name changes. Ratau-Dlamini added that businesses would not be forced to change their street addresses or remove name boards immediately and that street name signs would remain for the next three years. (News24.com, October, 19, 2009)

Schabir Shaik Controversy Not Going Away

17. (U) The Presidency confirmed on October 19 that it had received an application for pardon from Schabir Shaik on April 24, 2008. (Shaik was the former financial advisor to President Zuma who was

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sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence for having a "generally corrupt" relationship with the South African President. End note.) The Presidency stated that no decision on the matter had been made about whether a pardon would be forthcoming. Shaik had recently been paroled from prison on medical grounds, a highly contested decision that drew months of condemnation from opposition parties and human rights organizations. (The Presidency, October 19)

DA Pushes for Review of Corruption Charges Against Zuma

18. (U) The DA on October 21 asked the North Gauteng High Court to review the decision by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to drop corruption charges against Zuma. The DA stated that it wished to pursue the case in the interest of justice and the decision to do so was not politically motivated. There are about 700 charges of corruption and racketeering against Zuma, but the NPA dropped them earlier this year after the office released transcripts showing how charges against Zuma could have been politically motivated by former President Thabo Mbeki. (EWN, October 21)

Soccer Coach Resigns Ahead of World Cup

19. (U) Joel Santana, coach of the South African National Soccer Team (Bafana Bafana), resigned on October 20 as the team has now lost seven of the their last eight games. The South African Football Association is expected to announce the new coach of the national squad soon. (News 24, October 20)

RSA Muslims "Outraged" At Reports Claiming Existence of Terror Cells in Country

110. (U) eNews reports that South African Muslims are "outraged" about claims that terror cells are operating in the country. Muslim and Somali leaders distanced their communities from the reports, saying they were "irresponsible" and had sparked unnecessary paranoia. Local US Government operations shut their doors for two days last month after the National intelligence Agency (NIA) allegedly intercepted a call made from Cape Town to a Somali group

believed to have links to al-Qa'ida. It is reported that the call to blow up all US-owned buildings here was made from a shack in Cape Town's Khayelitsha Township. South Africa's Muslim community has slammed the allegations, blaming the media for aggravating the situation. [E.tv's 24-hour news television station that is only available on subscription]

RSA: Islamic Studies Institute Cites Flaws in Country's Capacity To Fight Global Terrorism

¶11. (U) The International Institute of Islamic Studies (IIIS) reports that South Africa's security services are "poorly" prepared to deal with global terrorist threats. The report cites a number of incidents that demonstrate the "inept" nature of the country's security services, including the Planet Hollywood bombings in 1998, and the smuggling into South Africa of a Pakistani man wanted by the US for his involvement in the bombing of the US Embassy in Dar es Salaam. The most recent threat targeting US interests in South Africa follows the US killing a senior Al Qaeda operative Saleh Ali Saleh in Somalia. The IIIS posits that incompetence coupled with the politicization of RSA's intelligence services are some of the problems confronting the security cluster. The current restructuring under way in South Africa's intelligence services, with an infusion of new blood, may be the opportune moment to rectify these "flaws". The report also proposes that government re-consider the formation of a dedicated inter-agency counter-terrorism unit. [Independent Qof a dedicated inter-agency counter-terrorism unit. [Independent think-tank headed by Prof Hussein Solomon]

International News

Motlanthe Visits Sudan

¶12. (U) Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe is on a working visit to Sudan that began on October 21 and ends on October 24. Motlanthe is expected to hold discussions on Sudan's 2010 election, a national referendum, governance experiences, and other matters related to the implementation of the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The visit takes place within the context of the advancement of the African agenda and South Africa's commitment to assist the Sudanese people in the efforts to restore peace and to contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of the Sudan. (The Presidency, October 19)

Arms Committee Says it Will Halt Sales to Zimbabwe

¶13. (U) Following increasing scrutiny about the South Africa Government's arms sales to Zimbabwe, the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) has decided to halt arms sales to the neighboring country, Justice Minister Jeff Radebe and NCACC

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chairperson stated in Parliament. However, arms sales to Venezuela have been approved and the NCACC is considering similar requests from Syria. Radebe said the decision to halt arms sales to Zimbabwe had nothing to do with domestic pressure. (IDASA Briefing, October 16)